

Iowa Bird-Life

Published Quarterly by

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS UNION

Edited by **FRED J. PIERCE**, Winthrop, Iowa

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The Union was organized in 1923, for the purpose of increasing public sentiment for the study and protection of Iowa birds, and for disseminating ornithological knowledge.

Membership dues (including subscription) are one dollar a year. Special rate for all libraries, public or college, fifty cents a year. Those living outside of Iowa may obtain the journal by subscription for fifty cents a year.

THE NEW JOURNAL.

This issue of our publication comes to you in a smaller size of page and under a new name. It may look a bit unfamiliar, but a perusal of its contents will disclose that it is the same useful paper, filled with news of interest to the membership and field notes which show the status of bird life in different parts of our state. In the past there had been some suggestion by members that our journal be issued in a smaller, more attractive form that would conform to standards set by various other bird publications. Early this year a letter was written to each of the officers and the members of the executive council to ascertain if this change of size were really desired. The vote for the new journal was practically unanimous. A deciding factor was that the change of size would mean no increase in publishing costs. With the smaller size we shall have twice as many pages as formerly and at the same cost. We trust that all our readers will be well pleased with the new size and will find it much more convenient for filing, binding, or mailing.

With the issuance of the new journal the Iowa Ornithologists Union arrives at its third stage of publication. The Union was organized in 1923. For several years thereafter the medium of publication was by mimeographed letters, which were mailed from time to time and contained news, notes and notices to the members. Dr. F. L. R. Roberts became the Union's editor in 1928 and the next year he began getting out his notes in printed form on letter-size sheets. A very convenient and appropriate title at that time—"The Bulletin"—was adopted. This paper was continued for two years (1929-1930), and under Dr. Roberts' efficient editorial management its evolution from a news bulletin into a bird journal was rapid and inevitable. Now we begin the publication of the new IOWA BIRD-LIFE, and we trust that it will enjoy the same popularity as "The Bulletin," will prove as useful, and will provide as much inspiration for our members.

The new title is also a step forward. It has seemed desirable to give our publication a title that will at once identify it as belonging to the Iowa organization. IOWA BIRD-LIFE was chosen from a number of names submitted. The practice of naming after a bird has become quite general, and since it leads to some confusion we did not follow it. Mr. A. J. Palas, long prominent in the affairs of the Union, makes this comment: "The work of Dr. Roberts has given the publication a distinctive character as a bird magazine or periodical; this having been accomplished, we are now ready to give it a distinctive name."

We plan to keep reasonably close to a quarterly schedule, publishing during the months of March, June, September and December. Contributors will please bear this in mind and send in their notes well in advance of publication. We have much hope for the future of IOWA BIRD-LIFE and believe that it will hold an important place in furthering the work of bird study and bird protection in this state, as well as provide a convenient repository for brief notes of Iowa bird students. We especially desire articles concerning bird events and observations within Iowa, but our columns are also open to those who live elsewhere. Let every reader consider himself a member of the editorial staff, and let him send in frequently the more interesting of his notes.

We have an abundance of material on hand and some of it must wait for future issues. This is indicative of the healthy condition of the Union and would warrant an increase in the number of pages of our publication if our funds would permit this expansion. However, only a certain portion of our income can be used for publishing work. If we are to increase the size of the journal, we must increase correspondingly the amount of our income. This can be accomplished by building up a larger membership. To increase our membership should be the aim of every member. This should be fairly easy to accomplish, for there are scores of people in Iowa who are interested in birds and who can be induced to join us by a little persuasion. If every member will put his shoulder to the wheel and secure one or more new members this year, our membership will be doubled and our journal will have a wider circulation and greater usefulness. Unless this is done, some of our issues will have to be small ones. With much excellent material on the editor's desk, it is hoped that many of the future issues can be as large as the present one. We are depending on you for hearty cooperation. Please don't disappoint us!

—F. J. P.

BIRDS OF EARLY IOWA*

By E. D. NAUMAN

During the years immediately following the Civil War a pioneer family lived on a farm in Keokuk County about five miles from the site of the present town of Keota. The oldest son in the family, then a small boy just able to make his way around the farm, tells the following story of the birds so familiar to the pioneers but now almost unknown.

Our cabin stood upon an eminence on the east bank of Clear Creek which soon ceased to be "clear" owing to the breaking up and cultivation of more and more of its watershed. To the south of the residence and occupying lower ground was a meadow about twenty rods wide. Beyond this meadow to the southward stretched a fine large native forest unbroken for miles except by a few small farms that here and there had been hewn out of the wilderness. To the west and northwest there was also timber and brush lands, and to the east and northeast lay the clearing which constituted my father's farm. Since there was no public road within half a mile of the house, the creaking of excarts and the rattle of farm wagons did not disturb the serenity of our surroundings. The woods, the meadows, and the farm lands were a paradise for the wild birds.

Directly south of our house and beyond the meadow, in the midst of moderately large timber, stood a huge oak tree, the patriarch of the forest. It reared its lofty head some forty feet above the surrounding trees and stretched its branches out over the forest like the arms of a giant extending in benediction. The trunk of this great tree was nearly six feet in diameter and when it fell a victim to the woodman's ax in later years a count of its annual rings showed that it must have been a sapling as large around as a man's coat sleeve at the time Columbus discovered America.

Upon this tree during migration time the Passenger Pigeons used to alight and roost by the thousands. So numerous were they that the upper branches occasionally gave way under their weight and for a few minutes confusion reigned, the beating of the birds' wings sounding not unlike the roll of distant thunder. Then the noise gradually died away as the pigeons found another resting place, smoothed their ruffled plumage, and settled down for the night.

The number of these birds was almost incredible. For days at a time one could not look up at the sky without seeing some of them in flight and occasionally during the migration season there were so many that they obscured the sun and cast a shadow upon the earth like passing clouds.

Some five hundred feet northeast of this great oak and near the edge of the meadow stood an ancient and wide-spreading elm. This tree and its nightly occupants furnished my boyish curiosity and imagination many a thrill, for it was usually the roosting place of a flock of wild turkeys. I could sit upon our doorstep in the twilight and see one dusky form after another make its way up from limb to limb in the old elm until I could count from eighteen to twenty-five dark spots in the tree. My father was a worshipper of nature and never bothered these stately and beautiful birds.

In the early morning the turkeys would fly off the old elm and leisurely hunt grasshoppers over the meadow and through the orchard, disappearing after a while in the cornfield, apparently not afraid of any one on the premises. When I was just learning to count my mother called me to the east window and asked me to count the Wild Turkeys quietly foraging through the orchard. With considerable difficulty I made out that there were twenty-two.

One spring my father was preparing to have some brush land broken for cultivation. The man who had undertaken to do the work came one morning in June with a great plow which had a wooden beam ten feet or more in length, a plow bottom in the rear that turned a furrow nearly two feet wide, and a pair of trucks in front. But what was of especial interest to me was the fact that he had five fine horses. That kind of work was generally done with the help of oxen. Four years old, bare headed and bare footed, I took my

* Reprinted from THE PALIMPSEST for April, 1924, by permission of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

chances with briars, thorn bushes and rattle snakes, and followed this most interesting outfit to the brush land which was to be transformed into a cultivated field.

While they were making the first round with considerable noise and shouting at the horses, a great bird suddenly flew out of the bushes and into the timber beyond. "That's a Wild Turkey," said my father, as he went into the bushes from which the bird had appeared. In a few moments he came back with his straw hat full of turkey eggs and hurried off to the house where he found an old hen accommodating enough to finish the job of incubation. The birds raised out of this flock, together with some new blood added a few years later when father found another nest, made the foundation for a thriving bronze turkey industry.

An old hickory tree east of the orchard was a favorite resting place for the Pinnated Grouse or Prairie Chickens which were about as numerous then as the several species of blackbirds are today. An uncle who lived with us one year acquired a taste for Prairie Chicken. He had an old rifle with an octagonal barrel that seemed to me as long as a fence rail. It must have weighed at least fifteen pounds. Sometimes when a supply of Prairie Chicken was desired, the east window was raised a few inches and the muzzle of this old gun was poked out. Every time the gun spit fire we could see a chicken tumble to the ground. When he had brought down enough chickens for a "mess all round" he went out and brought them in.

It is unnecessary to more than mention here the thousands of ducks and geese of many species that passed over every spring and fall: at least a few of most of these species are still alive and familiar to many people. Our game laws have helped in their preservation and an awakening to the danger of the extermination of these creatures is fortunately apparent today.

One class of birds seen during migration time in those days especially inspired my youthful mind with awe and admiration. These were the great White or Whooping Cranes and the Sand-hill Cranes. They used to come along in flocks of from three to twenty or more, at an immense elevation, sweeping the sky in great majestic circles and ever and anon came that peculiar "whoop" that sounded like a combination of flute, bugle, and foghorn. I have not been favored by the sight of a crane or heard that raucous "whoop" for many a long year.

Another bird that was rather common in those days was the beautiful and graceful Swallow-tailed Kite. Individuals of this species could be seen floating about in the air almost any summer day, frequently carrying mice, ground squirrels, frogs, or snakes in their talons, as if they enjoyed the sensation of being carried about by the air while regarding the tidbit in their talons as a child might contemplate an apple or an orange. The last one of these beautiful creatures it was my good fortune to see came over Sigourney in the summer of 1910. His shadow flitted across my path one day as I was walking in the street. I looked up and was delighted to see that even one of these graceful birds was still alive for I had not seen one for twenty years before. I watched his evolutions and gyrations over the city quite a while, then he disappeared to the eastward. The next day a man came to town carrying its dead body. He said he did not know what kind of bird it was but saw it soaring about over his premises and thinking it was after his chickens rushed for his "blunderbuss" and put a sudden stop to its supposed evil intentions.

In addition to these feathered inhabitants of the land there were others, less numerous or more retiring, but well known to the pioneers. From the woods nearby came the drumming of the Ruffed Grouse and in the dusk the Whip-poor-will, close at hand but unseen, sent out its weird chant. This is sometimes heard to-day but for the most part the wild birds have disappeared. The domestic hen clucking contentedly in the barn yard has taken the place of the Prairie Chicken and we look up to see the air-planes whirring by instead of the clouds of pigeons, the flocks of cranes, or the solitary kite circling in the sky.

A SUSTAINED INTEREST IN IOWA BIRDS

By ALTHEA R. SHERMAN, National, Iowa

In the past one hundred years several periods of dearth have been followed by those of abundant interest in Iowa bird study. It is hoped that these intermittent stages are now to be succeeded by one of well sustained interest. Scientific explorers, traveling on the rivers of our border, began the study. In the months of July, August and September of 1867 there came a young man, who studied and wrote about the birds he saw in seven counties. He soon was to become a famous ornithologist and mammalogist, known to the world as Dr. Joel A. Allen, editor of THE AUK.

Twenty years passed before resident Iowans showed organized activities. In 1888 and 1889 there was published THE HAWKEYE ORNITHOLOGIST AND OOLOGIST, a magazine having contributors from numerous states. It did not long survive.

The Iowa Ornithological Association was organized in June of 1894. The following years its membership list showed 36 Active Members, 8 Associate and 2 Honorary Members. At that time twelve residents of Iowa belonged to the American Ornithologists' Union. This was twice the number that belonged to it twenty-five years later. Among the members of the Iowa Ornithological Association, who have remained in the state are Carl Fritz Henning, Charles R. Keyes, and Charlotte M. King; among those who emigrated early are Carleton R. Ball, Wilmon Newell, Morton E. Peck, Guy C. Rich and E. B. Webster. Several of these are now pursuing other sciences.

In the highest class, that of "Fellows," of the American Ornithologists' Union have been two students of Iowa birds: Charles Aldrich and Dr. Lynds Jones. The latter, now ranking among the leading ornithologists of North America, began his bird study in Iowa. Of those elected to the next class, that of "Members," native Iowans have held a larger percentage than any other state. What of the eleven of Iowa nativity who have been elected to that class? Dr. R. M. Anderson (author of "The Birds of Iowa") is in Canada; Frank Bond is in Washington, D. C.; William Alanson Bryan has resigned; William Leon Dawson is dead; George K. Cherrie, when at home from exploring expeditions, is in Vermont; Donald R. Dickey, Barton W. Evermann and J. Eugene Law are in California; Ira N. Gabrielson is in Oregon; Junius Henderson is in Colorado; Althea R. Sherman, alone of those having Iowa nativity, remains in the state; Dr. T. C. Stephens, editor of the WILSON BULLETIN, is a native of Michigan; Dr. Paul Bartsch, born in Germany, now in Washington, D. C., spent his youth in Iowa. Not only in ornithology, but in other sciences, Iowa fails to hold her native sons.

The birds of Iowa have lent themselves most generously to the thorough investigations made by a score or more of students of their life histories. It is doubtful, if the birds of any other state have been the subjects of so many of these pioneer life histories. A vast amount of this sort of study remains to be done. Every member of the Iowa Ornithologists Union can share in this study as long as we keep our birds, but that will not be long unless everyone awakens to the exterminating threats that reside in Screech Owls, Ring-necked Pheasants, Bronzed Grackles, Starlings, English Sparrows and House Wrens.

OUR VANISHING BIRDS OF PREY

By DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS

Our birds of prey are facing extinction. Useful as well as harmful birds are hastening to join the ever increasing ranks of species wiped out by man, the most blood-thirsty animal the world has ever known. Sportsmen and farmers kill them and excuse themselves by saying these birds are harmful. And what are the bird lovers and ornithologists doing about it? Nothing or next to nothing. Are they endeavoring to educate the killer to give them a respite? Yes, a few are, in a lukewarm and half-hearted manner.

Do you doubt that this slaughter should cease? No fair-minded investigator can doubt. The facts are overwhelming. A. K. Fisher, working for the United States government, examined the stomach contents of thousands of raptorial birds killed in all parts of the country and at all seasons of the year. His reports prove conclusively that many of these birds are extremely useful. The few species that were shown to be harmful are rapidly decreasing in numbers.

One of our most common large hawks is the Marsh Hawk. It is one of those often referred to by people who know no better as "chicken" hawk. Of 124 stomachs from this species examined by Fisher, 102 contained mice, gophers and other mammals, reptiles and insects, and only 7 poultry or game birds. The Marsh Hawk is thus one of those which does a little harm as well as a great deal of good. Fisher says of it: "Although this hawk occasionally carries off poultry and game birds, its economic value as a destroyer of mammal pests is so great that its slight irregularities should be pardoned. Unfortunately, however, the farmer and sportsmen shoot it down at sight, regardless of the fact that it preserves an immense quantity of grain, thousands of forest trees, and innumerable nests of game birds by destroying the vermin which eat the grain, girdle the trees and devour the eggs and young of the birds."

The following extract from a recent Annual Report of the Chief of the U. S. Biological Survey shows that recent investigations bear out Fisher's earlier ones: "Eleven hundred pellets of Marsh Hawks, picked up on a heavily stocked quail preserve, proved on analysis to contain among other items the remains of 925 cotton rats and only four quail. Cotton rats are important destroyers of quail eggs, and results of examination of these pellets indicate that the Marsh Hawk may be a decided factor for the good of the quail." Yet the Marsh Hawk is the favorite target for the vindictive attacks of the enemies of the birds of prey.

The Red-tailed Hawk is another frequent sufferer. Of 562 stomachs examined by Fisher, 515 contained remains of mice and other mammals, reptiles, insects, etc., and 54 game birds of poultry. This hawk, however, is such a slow flier that there is, in its case, a great percentage of probability that bird remains in its stomach may be those of dead, sickly, wounded, or otherwise injured individuals.

All hawks render good service to the very species they prey on for they take the sick and unfit and thus prevent the spread of contagion and prevent the unfit from reproducing. If a hawk were pursuing a covey of quail, you can see that if one of them were slightly sick with a contagious disease it would fly more slowly and dodge less adroitly than those that were in perfect health, and would more easily fall prey to the rush of the hawk. The late Dr. Forbush, State Ornithologist for Massachusetts, reported an occurrence on a game farm in Scotland. Thousands of pheasants were raised under natural conditions on a large tract of waste land. Wardens were hired to kill all raptorial birds and mammals. A disease broke out, however, and ninety-nine per cent of the pheasants died. If there had been a normal number of birds of prey present, they would have killed the first sick birds before the epidemic could have spread.

It is admitted that a few species of these birds are harmful to game if in too great numbers. But only five of the more than fifty species are ever noticeably destructive, and the amount of destruction even by these species is offset by the good they do.

It is said that hawks and owls kill game and some of them do. It is also said that the present scarcity of game is due to the destructive habits of our birds of prey. If that is true, how does it happen that Nova Scotia, the place in all America which has the most Goshawks, the worst offenders, has also the most game birds? How does it happen that when man came to this country he found a hundred times as many birds of prey as we now have and along with them were the most amazingly large numbers of game birds that have ever existed in any country? The real cause for the alarming decrease of our game birds is the slaughter by man.

It is admitted that some hawks are destructive to poultry. But it has been

shown that if a Purple Martin house be erected on a pole in a chicken yard, these swallows will keep hawks away. Many times it has been shown that the loss of poultry laid to hawks has really been due to dogs, cats, or rats, and has continued after all neighboring hawks were killed.

Let us look at the record of the worst offender of them all, the Goshawk. This large and rapacious species is a bird of the forest regions and though it destroys many mammals, large birds such as grouse, quail and domestic poultry are its principal prey. Fortunately, it inhabits chiefly the region to the north of the United States and only occasionally (usually at intervals of some years) appears in any considerable numbers in our territory. When it does so, it is undoubtedly seriously destructive to the Ruffed Grouse and other forest birds in the northern tier of states, but most of them do not wander very far south in the United States. Of 29 stomachs examined (8 empty), 10 contained mammals, 3 insects, 1 a centipede. Nine contained poultry or game birds. Many of the sport-men who denounce the Goshawk would not know one if they should ever happen to see one. The "Goshawks" they claim to shoot are more likely to be harmless and useful species such as the Red-shouldered and Marsh Hawks, which are protected in some states and should be in all of them.

As Dr. L. A. Hausman has said, "If one should see a man in a blue suit making his escape after having robbed a house, and should thereupon sally forth into the street with a shotgun and blaze away at every man in a blue suit that he happened to meet, he would be carrying out in practice the principle upon which many act when they wage indiscriminate warfare upon our native hawks."

Of the owls in general, Fisher says: "It may be stated with confidence that owls are among the most beneficial of all birds, inflicting very little damage on the poulterer and conferring vast benefits on the farmer. Their eyesight * * * is the keenest in the early hours of evening and in early morning. Hunting thus, in dim light, their food consists largely of those animals which hawks do not trouble at all or destroy only in small numbers. The work of owls thus supplements that of hawks and materially assists in preventing an undue increase of many obnoxious rodents." Out of 721 stomachs of our native species of owls (exclusive of the Great Horned), Fisher found remains of poultry or game in 9, and of other birds in only 52; most of them contained remains of mice.

The Barn Owl, for example, is notoriously beneficial. Lewis Wayne Walker reports that during 96 nights that they were watched in their nest a pair brought in a total of 790 rats and mice and only two birds. The catch on one night consisted of 17 field mice, 9 Norway rats and one house mouse. Fisher says: "During the summer of 1890 a pair of Barn Owls occupied one of the towers of the Smithsonian building in the city of Washington. On June 28, the writer ascended to their home and found the floor strewn with pellets, and the nest, composed of a mass of broken-down ones. An examination of 200 of these pellets gave a total of 454 skulls. Of these 225 were meadow mice, 2 pine mice, 179 house mice, 20 rats, 6 jumping mice, 20 shrews, 1 star-nosed mole, and 1 Vesper Sparrow."

The Great Horned Owl must, however, be placed in a class with the Goshawk as really destructive to game and poultry as in 127 stomachs examined, remains of such birds were found in 31 cases, although 75 of them contained mice or insects. But even when the Great Horned Owl is troublesome, it is, by its great size and striking appearance, easily distinguished from the useful kinds, and there is not a particle of excuse for shooting any of the other owls for its offenses. Neither is there a particle of reason for putting the Great Gray Owl and the Snowy Owl on the unprotected list. They both feed mainly on rodents (the Great Gray Owl almost exclusively) and their rarity in the United States would render them practically harmless economically, even if this were not so. Yet when exceptionally severe weather or lack of food drives the Snowy Owl from its northern home, practically every one of them that enters the United States is slaughtered on account of its conspicuousness and beauty. There should be a law protecting this bird in every state in the Union that it is ever known to visit.

LITTLE BIOGRAPHIES

The following notes of introduction to some of the members of the Union continue the series started in the July Bulletin. They are not really meant to be biographies but are just a few notes to help us know each other better. The order in which they appear in our publication does not indicate the writer's opinion as to their importance. They are merely chosen at random with no plan at all as to who shall be first. When I am corresponding with some one, and happen to think of it, I ask them for some facts about themselves.

—F. L. R. R.

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When I last heard from MRS. MARY L. BAILEY, our secretary, she was in San Antonio. She expected to migrate north so as to reach her home in Sioux City about the first of April. Mrs. Bailey was the first secretary of the Iowa Ornithologists Union, and except for a recess of two or three years, has been secretary ever since. She has also been active in the affairs of the Sioux City Bird Club, having served in nearly every capacity, including five years as its president. She taught bird study in the public schools of Sioux City for nine years.

Mrs. Bailey first studied zoology at Holyoke College in her girlhood. Later she had three summer courses in ornithology at Cornell University under Dr. A. A. Allen. She also had a course in ecology with Dr. Jones, of Oberlin, making the trip west with the class of summer students through Yellowstone, Glacier National and Mount Ranier Parks and on to the Pacific Ocean.

For the last seventeen years, our secretary has done intensive field work and has had the exceptional privilege of studying birds while travelling thru Europe in 1929.

* * *

ARTHUR J. PALAS was also present at the meeting when the Union was formed at Ames in March, 1923, and has not missed a meeting since. He has been on the executive board, has been treasurer and president of our organization, and is now a member of the executive board again. Mr. and Mrs. Palas spend much time together in bird study. I've been on field trips with them and I'm hanged if I know which is the better ornithologist. Mr. Palas helped to organize the Des Moines Audubon Society and was first president of it. His wife is president now.

Palas graduated from Drake in 1907, where he received the degree Ph. B. Later he graduated in law from the University of Texas. He served as county attorney of Clayton county, and is now practicing law in Des Moines.

Mr. Palas had a remarkable experience in bird-world in 1923 and I am quoting it from a letter he wrote to me. "My most interesting bird experience is a story. I call it a story for I can hardly expect anyone to believe it, but it is true. On March 18, 1923, the only time that I saw Bohemian waxwings, I saw 5,000 of them! They were feeding on hackberries and wild hemp extending for a distance of about half a mile up and down the bottom along Walnut Creek between Des Moines and Valley Junction. The hackberries were unusually loaded with fruit that year. This bottom has very many large hackberry trees; in fact, most of the other trees have been long removed, making the finest stand of hackberry trees that could be imagined, most of them of large size. I counted the birds as nearly as that was possible in many trees and in certain areas and computed the numbers in the various areas of different degrees of concentration. By the best computations that I found possible, I reached the astounding total of 10,000 to 12,000 birds. I sat down, pencil in hand, and made figures which reached these totals. Since my figures could not be exact, I wanted to be conservative and so I divided these figures by two. I must have seen at least 5,000 to 6,000 of these beautiful birds."

Mr. Palas has 324 species of birds on his "life" list, from Iowa, Colorado and northeastern Iowa.

* * *

DR. CHARLES R. KEYES is a "before the first" member of the Ornithologists Union, for he was active in the former organization, the Iowa Ornitholo-

gical Association. As I remember it from some old copies of this Association's magazine, he was the first president. I do remember that he is the only member of the present Union who was present at the founding of the older Association. Carl Fritz Henning, of Boone, was also one of the most active members of that organization but he joined it in its second year.

Dr. Keyes received his Ph. B. at Cornell College in 1894, A. M. and Ph. D. at Harvard, and spent the years of 1912 and 1913 at the Universities of Munich and Berlin. He is professor of German language and literature at Cornell and research associate of the State Historical Society of Iowa as director of the State Archeological Survey, to which his summers are devoted. I came across a book on the geological formations of Iowa which he had written, so he must be a geologist also, though he did not mention it in his reply to my request for biographical material. He has written notes on bird life for many of the ornithological journals. We are hoping he will present a paper at the meeting of the Union in May. —DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS.

FIELD NOTES

Studying Iowa Screech Owls—By the middle of February the mating season of the Screech Owl seems to be near its close and searching for nest sites begins. As early as February 13 one of these owls has been found by day in a nest box. Another year the first date was on February 26, but usually it is some time in March before these trial tests of boxes commence. About a fortnight later the first egg may be found.

For twenty-two years I have kept an all year round watch of the behavior of these undesirable birds, and they have proved to be wholly undesirable. Within these years there have been ten nestings started in five of my bird boxes. Only from the second nesting was a brood allowed to go forth. Nevertheless, there were enough unchecked nestings in woodpecker holes to afford an evil increase of the species. Our breeding Phoebe and Baltimore Orioles destroyed by them have never had successors.

Since the coming of a neighbor, handy with a gun, whose children are paid fifty cents for every dead Screech Owl brought me, some headway has been made against these destroyers. After 1927, when I saw eight of these dead owls, the harmless birds have had less danger, but the mitigation is only partial.

When the ground thaws out I have for burial eight Screech Owls "collected" within a period of about twenty days of the year. They will not be "laid away tenderly and reverently" as the sickening sentimentalist describes his interment of a Screech Owl. To give battle to these owls along with the noxious Starlings and Ring-necked Pheasants calls for the cooperation of all bird-loving Iowans.—ALTHEA R. SHERMAN, National, Iowa.

(It is frequently asserted that the Ring-necked Pheasant is very destructive to eggs, young, and smaller birds found about the fields. Authentic information regarding this alleged predatory habit will be welcomed by this paper.—Ed.)

The 1930 Christmas Bird Census in Iowa.—Twelve Iowa cities were represented in BIRD-LORE'S annual bird census: Ames, Bettendorf, Des Moines, Eldora, Keokuk, Ogden, Pierson, Sigourney, Sioux City, Spirit Lake, Webster and Winthrop. No less than 53 species of birds were recorded on the combined lists. These birds are listed below. The number given after the bird indicates the number of lists on which it appeared.

Herring Gull 2, Double Crested Cormorant 1 (Keokuk), American Merganser 2, Mallard 2, Canada Goose 1 (Eldora), Wilson's Snipe 1 (Des Moines), Bobwhite 6, Prairie Chicken 2, Ring-necked Pheasant 6, Mourning Dove 2, Marsh Hawk 3, Cooper's Hawk 1 (Pierson), Red-tailed Hawk 7, Red-shouldered Hawk 1 (Bettendorf), Broadwinged Hawk 1 (Bettendorf), Rough-legged Hawk 3, Bald Eagle 1 (Bettendorf), Sparrow Hawk 1 (Sioux City), Short-eared Owl 3, Barred Owl 4, Screech Owl 3, Great Horned Owl 2, Belted Kingfisher 1 (Des Moines), Hairy Woodpecker 12, Downy Woodpecker 12, Red-headed Woodpecker 8, Red-bellied Woodpecker 7, Flicker 8, Red-shafted Flicker 1 (Sioux

City), Prairie Horned Lark 3, Blue Jay 12, Crow 12, Starling 1 (Eldora), Redwinged Blackbird 3, Rusty Blackbird 1 (Sioux City), Purple Finch 2, Goldfinch 7, Harris' Sparrow 1 (Pierson), Tree Sparrow 11, Slate-colored Junco 12, Song Sparrow 4, Cardinal 11, Cedar Waxwing 2, Northern Shrike 1 (Sioux City), Brown Thrasher 1 (Ogden), Winter Wren 1 (Ogden), Brown Creeper 7, White-breasted Nuthatch 12, Tufted Titmouse 5, Chickadee 12, Golden-crowned Kinglet 1 (Keokuk), Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1 (Bettendorf), Robin 1 (Des Moines).

BIRD-LORE sponsored its first Christmas census in 1900. The first Iowa bird census was taken in 1903 by Rett E. Olmstead at Decorah. The next one was not taken until 1906, but since that time Iowa has been regularly represented.—Editor.

Snowy Owls and other Winter Birds at Paton, Iowa.—Our weather has been so mild it seems unusual that we should have a pair of Snowy Owls come to our locality during the last few days. We had a pair here in January, 1929, but at that time the weather was cold and severe in the north. This year the two owls were seen in the same field as on the previous occasion. One of them was shot and turned over to Mr. Walter Rosene, of Ogden, who sent it to Prof. Kubichek for the Coe College museum.

On December 21, 1930, a friend and I watched a flock of fifty Canada Geese feeding near here, and this morning a farmer reported seventy-two passing over his farm, traveling northwest. This surely heralds mild weather or a scarcity of food in the south.

Paton is located in an open territory ten miles from a river or stream of any size, so we do not have some of the timber birds early. Yet the last few days I have seen Slate-colored Juncos, Tree Sparrows, Brown Creepers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, one Flicker, one Robin, and Chickadees. Blue Jays feed at our bird tray every day, and hundreds of Crows each night congregate in a couple of groves near town.—E. W. SELLS, Paton, Iowa, January 29, 1931.

Cheated Out of a Dinner—Some years ago while teaching, my way to school lay past a small tract of forest. One morning while passing this tract, I heard a flopping sound as of great wings beating against brush. Looking up I saw a Red-tailed Hawk wheeling about in the air and apparently directing his attention towards a large oak tree that stood apart a short distance from the other trees. Soon he made a swoop towards this tree and I noticed a fox squirrel nimbly dodging to the other side of the trunk. The great bird rose up into the air and tried again and again, but each time the squirrel would get safely on the other side of the tree. It evidently regarded the whole performance as a game of "hide and seek," and began to bark and chatter in derision at the hawk's seeming awkwardness.

However, at this point things suddenly became too interesting for the squirrel, to be regarded as a joke any longer. Another Red-tail appeared on the scene and both of them made dives at it. The chattering stopped and with great speed the squirrel made its way to the hole in the tree just in time to cheat the hawks out of a good dinner. If my vision did not deceive me, one of the hawks had a tuft of hair out of the squirrel's tail in its claws.

After giving a few screams of rage and disappointment, the hawks flew away in search of another prospect for dinner.—E. D. NAUMAN, Sigourney, Iowa.

Winter Birds at Des Moines.—On December 31, 1930, Robert Stewart, a local high school senior and an alert bird observer, came excitedly to our door about 1:30 P. M. and asked us to come with him to the Raccoon River, where he had something unusual to show us. We wasted no time in getting there and found, as Robert had hoped, the little Saw-whet Owl just where he had been a half hour before.

The owl was sitting in a little hawthorn tree, not ten feet from a road. He was perched just even with our eyes, and was exceedingly tame so that we got within two feet of him and could easily see his white sides streaked with

brown, and scapulars spotted with white. He had no ear-tufts, and the big yellow iris made him a pretty little fellow to look at. We could have caught him for closer observation, but decided we had had quite a thrill without that.

The Des Moines Water Works grounds, which form the Des Moines Audubon Society's bird sanctuary, are affording us much pleasure this winter. There is open water there and so far we have had ten Mallards, two Mergansers, and two Green-winged Teal there, so we are hoping they will stay clear through the winter and that some may nest there next spring. Kingfishers are always to be seen there.

Persons at various points have seen Mourning Doves and Cedar Waxwings this winter, and on January 2, 1931, Mrs. J. E. Stewart had between 90 and 100 Bohemian Waxwings at her bittersweet vines in the front yard. A Wilson's Snipe on our Christmas bird census was another "rare" specimen.—MRS. ARTHUR J. PALAS, Des Moines, Iowa.

Notes on a Mallard Parasite and the White-winged Scoter.—On October 16, 1930, a male Mallard in very brilliant plumage was brought in to me to be mounted. The bird was seemingly in good health, not emaciated in the least. On making the incision on the breast and skinning back a ways, I discovered that the flesh was infested with a parasite about the size and shape of the ordinary maggot, but the parasite was a little more yellowish in color and very pointed at both ends. The flesh was a solid mass of them. All were pointed upward toward the throat and so thick were these parasites they almost touched one another. They continued to the tip of the wing and in every part of the flesh, except at the base of the skull. I removed a few. They mashed as easily as a maggot, but showed no life.

Upon sending the body to our state museum at Iowa City, I was informed that the parasite was contracted in the extreme northern part of Canada. I received no further information, as to whether the malady was fatal or was of long duration. Upon inquiry the hunter stated that the Mallard was vigorous in flight and was with a female of the same species. No other ducks were present. If the hunter had prepared this duck for food the parasite would not have been discovered, as skinning was necessary to reveal it. The bird was killed in Delaware County, Iowa.

During the second week in October, 1930, our summer-like weather changed suddenly to extreme cold, and at once the ducks came down from the north in vast herds. Hunters' bags were quickly filled. Among the many taken were a few of an odd species. Several of these were brought to me to be identified. I pronounced them the White-winged Scoter (*Oidemia deglandi*), but to make absolutely sure of the identity, I sent a specimen to our state museum at Iowa City. They verified the identity and said that for some unknown reason this scoter bred inland this year; and, having lived mostly on vegetation, its flesh was palatable. I had cooked them separately and they were as finely flavored as any of the other ducks. I mounted a pair and they are now in my collection. The data read October 16, 1930, Delaware County, Iowa. This is my first record of the White-winged Scoter as a migrant in Iowa.—O. M. GREENWOOD, Manchester, Iowa.

Notes from Sioux City.—A heavy flight of Lapland Longspurs took place on January 18, 1931, during a snowstorm, and the following day hundreds of the birds were picked up dead at various places in South Dakota. A few of the birds were heard flying around early on the morning of the 18th at Sioux City and were probably stragglers from the main flight through the Dakotas and Nebraska.

Three Whooping Cranes were seen by a hunter out in Western Nebraska in October, 1930. He mistook them for Snow Geese and shot one of the birds. The crane was turned over to Game Warden Mensinger, of Merriman, Nebraska, who received permission to make the bird into a museum specimen. The Whooping Crane is a passing bird and no doubt the last one will be taken by an uninformed hunter, just as the above bird was taken.

Many reports of wintering ducks, blackbirds, Robins and other species are being read almost daily, but the prize so far goes to a farmer from Yankton, S. D., who recently watched a hen pheasant taking care of a brood of pheasant chicks.—WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa, February 2, 1931.

Winter Notes from Vinton, Iowa.—On December 2, 1930, Dr. T. L. Chadbourne, of Vinton, noted Snow Buntings east of Atkins in the southern part of Benton County.

On December 26, 1930, a flock of twelve Bohemian Waxwings gathered in our orchard, eating the frozen apples still hanging on the trees. They did not stay long enough to call anyone that day, but on January 6, 1931, they came again. I immediately called to my mother, and called Dr. Chadbourne by 'phone who came over and watched them for a long time. There were at least twenty-five this time. They were very tame, allowing me to approach within fifteen feet of them. They appeared again on January 8 and 9. I have two previous records for Bohemian Waxwings—February 13, 1910, and January 2, 1915.

We have a wonderful place at home to see bird life. It is at the edge of town and possibly 500 feet from the Cedar River. Just north of us the river makes a large horseshoe bend. There are plenty of thickets, some timber land, pasture land, and also a small lake, within this bend.—WALTER L. BURK, Vinton, Iowa.

Winter Birds at Cedar Rapids.—I have had four Snowy Owls, taken in Iowa, brought to me this winter. These birds may be expected in Iowa during severe winters in the north, but the past winter was a mild one everywhere. On February 24, 1931, I observed a Saw-whet Owl within the limits of Cedar Rapids. An immature Bald Eagle, killed near Fairfax on November 16, 1930, was brought to me for mounting. Red-headed Woodpeckers and Sparrow Hawks were observed regularly about Cedar Rapids throughout the winter.—W. F. KUBICHEK, Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

A Note on the Snowy Owl.—Two Snowy Owls collected in northeastern South Dakota about the middle of January, 1931, proved to be a pair. They measured exactly the same length: 550 mm., but the wing of the female was 410 mm., while that of the male was only 400 mm. The female was extremely fat, had the stomach empty, and had very few lice. The male was very thin, was heavily infested with lice, and had the stomach stuffed with hair and bones of a cottontail rabbit.

A flock of north-flying ducks was reported at Ames, February 12. We hear the usual number of predictions of an early spring because "the peewees (Chickadees) are singing and the redbirds have come."—J. E. GUTHRIE, Professor of Zoology, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

Waxwing Visitors.—On the afternoon of February 16, 1931, a flock of sixty-one Bohemian Waxwings alighted near and in an asparagus patch south of our home. A month ago Mrs. J. E. Stewart counted some eighty-three on the bittersweet vines near her front porch. In 1922, a large flock was seen in late winter and early spring many times. They were most often seen around asparagus beds.—MRS. W. G. DuMONT, Des Moines, Iowa.

Advance of the Cardinal in Northwestern Iowa.—Two years ago I sent in an item about the first Cardinal I had seen in this county. These birds have slowly moved up the river and now there are several north of this city and nearly to the state line. The first Cardinal seen was about eight miles south of here. Now they are about twelve miles north of where I saw the first bird two years ago. As there are several here this winter, some may have gone still farther north. They have been seen along the Sioux River at Sioux Falls, S. D., for several years, and that is slightly north of this location.—O. S. THOMAS, Rock Rapids, Iowa.

A Scarcity of Winter Birds.—Birds have been very scarce in this locality all winter. In Riverside Park, where Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Downy Woodpeckers have in other years been abundant, field trips throughout the winter have yielded only a few individuals. In other years a few Robins and Bluebirds have wintered in the park, but this winter they have not been seen. On February 22, my husband and I went out on the Denison Highway for seventeen miles, then back by the way of Brown's Lake. We listed fourteen species of birds. The unusual ones were Red-winged Blackbirds, Bluebirds and Robins. The weather conditions have been most unusual. Very little snow or rain, hence it is very dry; that, and the scarcity of food, I believe to be the reason for so few birds.—MRS. MARIE DALES, Sioux City, Iowa.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Annual Convention to be held at Cedar Rapids, May 8 and 9.—The annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists Union will be held at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on Friday and Saturday, May 8 and 9. An invitation from the Cedar Rapids Nature Club has been accepted and we are to be their guests during the convention. A local committee is already working on arrangements. A fine program is being planned and all members are urged to attend. A program committee, composed of Dr. F. L. R. Roberts, Prof. W. F. Kubichek and Walter W. Bennett, has been appointed. A good share of the program is already outlined and those wishing to present papers, pictures, or talks should communicate with one of these men at the earliest possible moment.

It is not too early to make plans for being present at this big annual event, which this year promises to be one of the best in the history of the Union. The meeting will be held at the Montrose Hotel. Friday morning, May 8, will be devoted to the business meeting; Friday afternoon, the usual program of papers by members will be given. The annual ornithologists' banquet will be held in the evening, followed by an illustrated lecture of unusual interest. On Saturday morning field trips will be taken. One group will probably go to the Palisades State Park, near Mount Vernon, and the other to the Amana Society colony southwest of Cedar Rapids. After adjournment those who wish can go to Iowa City (30 miles) to view the University Museum which, by special arrangement, will be kept open through Saturday evening and Sunday.

The Montrose Hotel has been chosen for headquarters, with room rates as follows: Without bath, single, \$1.75-\$2.00; without bath, double, \$3.25-\$3.50; with bath, single, \$2.50-\$3.50; with bath, double, \$4.50-\$5.50.

* * *

A Timely Warning.—Iowa Ornithologists Union members well remember the battle which was waged to get our old friend Bob-white and his big cousin the Prairie Chicken put out of reach of the hunters and into a permanent closed season. This was all well and good, but we must not be asleep for I fear there will soon be a movement on foot to repeal this law. Some of the "killers" are anxious to kill the Bob-white "to keep them from inbreeding." I know very well that the hunters in the southern part of the state are very anxious to have the season opened again on Bob-white.

I think that our organization should have a committee to watch the legislature and, should anything like that appear, we should all bombard our senators and representatives with letters demanding that these birds be permanently protected, and the law remain just as it is. I mentioned this matter to our good friend "Andy," the genial announcer of WOI, after I had finished broadcasting the other day, and he promised me "the air" any time that I wanted to appear as "attorney for the defense" for Bob-white. I am quite sure that the Shenandoah radio stations would also help us along those lines, and if some one down in that corner of the state could arrange for that, I shall be glad to do the work at Ames over Station WOI. I'm ready to roll up my sleeves and fight for "Bobbie" at any time, for he is my favorite bird, and I consider him the most valuable bird in Iowa. We have such a large membership in Des Moines, they can watch developments and send out the S. O. S. call if anything of this sort should turn up. I am quite sure that Station WHO would cooperate with them also. Bob can't vote, but he's working for us. Let's work for him!—W. M. ROSENE, Ogden, Iowa, February 6, 1931.

* * *

The University of Iowa Museum recently acquired the collection of 500 mounted birds made by the Rev. Clinton M. Jones, of West Woodstock, Conn., who died in 1917. The collection was begun in 1875 and contains, in addition to the wealth of mounted birds, some 3000 bird eggs. There is one specimen of the extinct Passenger Pigeon in the collection. The Rev. Jones valued his collection at \$10,000 while he was living; but Director Homer R. Dill, of the University Museum now places a much higher value on it. The scientific importance and value of the collection cannot be measured in mere terms of money. We understand that the University of Iowa is to publish the bird journal of this collector. The journal extends from 1867 to 1917.

Iowa people whose names appeared on the program of the Wilson Ornithological Club at Cleveland, Ohio, December 29-30, 1930, were: Chas. J. Spiker, New Hampton, who spoke on "More Data on Feathered Victims of the Automobile;" Mrs. Mary L. Bailey, Sioux City, "Recent Interesting Birds Found in the Sioux City Region;" F. L. Fitzpatrick, Cedar Rapids, "Bilateral Ovaries in Raptorial Birds;" Dr. L. H. Pammel, Ames, "Further Work on Hummingbirds in Relation to Flowers;" W. F. Kubichek, Cedar Rapids, "Some South Dakota Birds with Special Studies of the Western Grebe" (moving pictures); Dr. T. C. Stephens, Sioux City, "Rambles in the Black Hills." (moving pictures).



* * *

Mrs. Flora May Tuttle died of cancer at her home at Osage, Iowa, on February 3, 1931, following a long illness. She was born in a log cabin in Delaware County, Iowa, April 15, 1868, and lived in Iowa most of her life.

Mrs. Tuttle achieved distinction in several fields of endeavor. She was much interested in all branches of natural science and specialized in geology and botany. She contributed several thousand geological specimens to our State University; but it was in the field of botany that her work was best known. She was author of a treatise on the "Flora of Mitchell County," and contributed hundreds of botanical specimens to the University of Iowa and to the State Agricultural College at Ames. She often collaborated with Dr. Pammel of the latter institution in botanical research work, and discovered in her own region the rare gray birch and the flower called "purple turtlehead." She was a great lover of the birds of her region and never tired of relating her ornithological experiences to her friends.

She was a member of the Iowa Ornithologists Union from its beginning and had membership in various organizations such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Iowa Academy of Science, as well as several local societies and clubs in which she was always active. She took much interest in church work, gave public lectures on nature in many cities, and was correspondent for several newspapers, besides devoting much time to her home and family. Hers was a busy, useful life and she will be missed by all who knew her.

* * *

"Compromised Conservation."—The leaflet bearing this title, recently published by the Emergency Conservation Committee and given a wide circulation among nature students, is aimed directly at Dr. Pearson and the National Association of Audubon Societies. The author charges the directorate of the Audubon Society with betraying the trust of its membership, with inexcusable inactivity in protection of bird life, with withholding funds contributed by members for such protection, and with inefficient and indifferent administration. The author does not mince words. There is no velvet language in his fiery tirade and he does not hesitate to accuse the Audubon Society of accepting money gifts from the gun and ammunition makers and of working hand and hand with them, at variance with the principles the society is pledged to uphold. Undoubtedly, these accusations and exposures have consid-

erably weakened the public's confidence in the Audubon Society. So far, no refutation has been made by the Society. The Emergency Committee asks the question, "Can the Audubon Society Explain?" The entire army of nature lovers in America is waiting for it to do so. We do not favor radical policies or emotionalism in literature, but an innuendo of this nature is certain to have one good effect. It will cause an investigation to be made, which will determine whether or not such a state of affairs really exists.

* * *

Last November, Dr. Rasek of Czecho-Slovakia visited our department. He is Forest Entomologist of his country. In one of his talks he told how he and his assistants were experimenting with bird houses, feeding-boards, and other devices to encourage the nesting of more of the useful insectivorous birds in their forests. As insecticides and their distribution in extensive forests even with airplanes are expensive, Dr. Rasek and his co-workers set about to see if birds could do the job of destroying certain forest insects as well and more cheaply. The results obtained so far have been very gratifying. Birds can be attracted to nesting devices in numbers and of such species as to control several of their most destructive forest insects. Dr. Rasek and his assistants are carrying on weekly short courses in the villages to teach farmers ways to arrange for nesting-boxes, feeding-boards, etc., to attract and maintain bird populations of numbers sufficient to control destructive insects.—G. O. HENDRICKSON, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa.

* * *

Two of our members gave talks on birds during the "Garden Short Course," offered by Iowa State College, Ames, January 27-28-29. Mrs. A. J. Palas spoke on "Making the Birds at Home in the Garden," and Walter Rosene, Sr., spoke on "Around the Year with the Birds in the Garden." We had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Rosene's talk broadcast from Station WOI at Ames.

* * *

E. D. Nauman, of Sigourney, and Walter L. Burk, of Vinton, both send in gifts of one dollar to help the Union in its publishing work. We thank these men for their generous aid. Our publishing costs are quite heavy and gifts of this sort are always appreciated and are put to good use.

* * *

The unusually mild Iowa winter was responsible for several bird records quite out of the ordinary. Mrs. C. R. King, of Sioux City, reports seeing a large flock of Bluebirds in January; Mrs. C. W. Price, of Spirit Lake, found an almost fully feathered young Blue Jay on January 31 (reported by Dr. Roberts); and Oscar Allert, our treasurer, saw a male Cowbird on January 30, certainly an unusual winter record for northeastern Iowa. B. O. Wolden writes from Estherville that "the Snowy Owls arrived early in December and were unusually numerous the first part of the winter, while Meadowlarks were reported during the winter and a Robin in January."

* * *

Mrs. Mary L. Bailey, our secretary, spent the winter in the South. Writing from San Antonio, Texas, on February 23, she says: "Am enjoying the Mockingbirds and Cardinals here. They are all around me and another, the Great-tailed Grackle, has a cheerful song. The small doves are also a product of Texas."

* * *

New members who have enrolled thus far in 1931 are: Walter L. Burk, Vinton; Dr. T. L. Chadbourne, Vinton; G. O. Hendrickson, Ames; Manchester, Iowa, Audubon Society; Mrs. C. N. Edge, New York City; Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Petranek, Cedar Rapids; Miss Lillian Serbousek, Cedar Rapids.

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